



## ORIENTAL CERAMIC SOCIETY OF HONG KONG LIMITED

Dear Members

February 2005

### **OCS Newsletter - Spring 2005**

This is the first in our new series of quarterly Newsletters. The objectives are to keep you in touch with the Society, the Executive Committee and other Members, and to provide a Diary of OCS events and other news at home and overseas.

We are all committed to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding of oriental art and culture. The OCS provides a forum for exchanging ideas and information in study sessions and travel programmes, a platform for scholarly lectures by distinguished speakers and a medium through which members may show their collections to other members and the public in exhibitions.

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Life in Hong Kong is seldom less than hectic and there are many demands upon your time. I hope you will find our Newsletter helpful as an aide-memoire. There are doubtless many ways in which it could be improved. Comments and suggestions are welcomed. If we've got it wrong, please let us know.

It only remains for me to wish you a Happy New Year of the Rooster – Kung Hei Fat Choy!

Sincerely yours

Malcolm Barnett  
President

## 1. Executive Committee

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## 2. Membership

We rely on membership subscriptions and healthy attendance at OCS events. If you have *any friends who share our interests* and are not already members, *please put them in touch with the OCS* (details above) and *bring them along to our next event*.

## 3. Diary for January 2005

January 18-31: Indian Interlude Tour – a cultural odyssey including Ajanta and Ellora, led by Helen Anderson and guided by Malathi Ramaswamy.  
(See report in Section 9 Highlights below.)

## 4. Diary for February 2005

February 1: “Politics & Porcelain in China”. Lecture by Rose Kerr, who recently retired as Keeper of the Far Eastern Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.(See report in Section 9 Highlights below.)

February 5: Guided Tour of Central Police Headquarters, Hollywood Road, Central accompanied by Mr. Alexander Hui Yat-chuen, an architect with an interest in architectural conservation and currently a curator with the Hong Kong University Gallery and Museum.

February 25: The Dr. K. S. Lo Memorial Lecture “The Belitung (‘Tang’) Shipwreck Cargo” by Mr. John S. Guy, Senior Curator/Acting Head of the Indian & Southeast Asian Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.  
(See further details in Section 9 Highlights below.)

## 5. Diary for March 2005

March 15: Lecture by Dr. Greg Thomas of Hong Kong University. This may be followed by a visit to HKMA Exhibition “Impressionism: Treasures from the National Collection of France” if it can be arranged.

## 6. Forthcoming OCS event

2006: OCS Exhibition “Art & Imitation”  
The Executive Committee proposes to arrange in 2006 what will be the first OCS exhibition for several years. It provides a special opportunity for members to open up their treasures to the public. You will be contacted shortly to ascertain what items you might wish to have included within the theme and structure of the exhibition.

## 7. News from other societies

February 23: Special Film Event, Presented by the Friends of the Art Museum, CUHK 7 pm at Visual Arts Centre, 7A Kennedy Road, Central, Hong Kong *Nushu: A Hidden Language of Women in China* In feudal China, Women were mostly illiterate, but in a remote area of Hunan, woman miraculously developed a separate written language called *Nu shu* (Nu-meaning woman and shu-meaning writing). This was a secret code between women that men were not allowed to learn. N.B. The film’s award-winning cinematographer, Ms Zhang Weimin, will be present in person. To reserve a space, please email Moya Duffy, [moyaduffy@hotmail.com](mailto:moyaduffy@hotmail.com) or Sarah Parnell, [sarahp@netvigator.com](mailto:sarahp@netvigator.com).

March 10: “The Shroud of Turin – Crucifixion Relic or Medieval Forgery?” Lecture by Mr. William Meacham, Honorary Research Fellow, Centre of Asian Studies at the Helena May, Garden Road, Central. Please apply direct to Joanne Chen, Helena May on 25226766) or by e-mail to [joanne@helenamay.com](mailto:joanne@helenamay.com)

## 8. News from overseas

March 10: London, New Bond Street – Sotheby’s Auction -Chinese & Japanese Works of Art (Exhibition March 6-9)

March 30: New York – Christie’s Auction – Important Snuff Bottles from J&J Collection Part II; Fine Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art.

March 31: New York Christie’s Auction Indian & Southeast Asian Art.

March 31: New York Sotheby’s Auction – Chinese Works of Art (Exhibition March 24-30).

April 1-6: New York – Arts of Pacific Asia Show, Gramercy Park, Lexington Avenue at 26<sup>th</sup> Street (preview March 31).

April 1-6: New York – International Asian Art Fair, The Seventh Regiment Armory, Park Avenue at 67<sup>th</sup> Street (preview March 31).

## 9. Highlights

### Indian Interlude Tour (18-31 January 2005)

Sixteen members of the OCS enjoyed a two-week tour exploring the wonders of Indian art, architecture, history, culture and cuisine. The group comprised Tour leader Helen Anderson, President Malcolm Barnett, Honorary Secretary Barbara Park, Honorary Treasurer Chris Hall, Jan Beards, Richard Fawls, Peter Gray, Elaine Koo, May Lau, Jean Lo, Susanna Liang Jacqueline Muller, Dawn Rooney, Maisie Wong, Henry Wong and Maria Yeung. Malathi Ramaswamy was our guide extraordinaire.

There was something for everyone to savour; the glorious Hindu sculptures at Mammalapuram; the Buddhist caves with their incredible paintings at Ajanta; the magnificent sculptures of the Jains, Buddhists and Hindus and spectacular monolith architecture at Ellora; the glorious carvings in the Jain temple at Ranakpur; the opulent lifestyle of the Maharannas as shown in the City Palace at Udaipur; and the mighty monuments of Purana Quila in Delhi where Malathi wove her special magic in conjuring the historical events of the Mughal and earlier dynasties.

We also recaptured some of the majesty of the British Raj at the "Beat the Retreat" ceremony, which was performed by the Indian army, navy and air force in the best traditions of the past. The colorful uniforms, the amazing camels that stood at silent attention for the 1 1/2 hours of the performance, the fine horses of the Indian cavalry, the swirling bagpipes and the martial music of military bands were impressive; the final hymn "Amazing Grace", said to have been Nehru's favorite, left no one dry-eyed. The "Grand Illumination" brought the proceedings to a final climax with strings of lights outlining the governmental buildings on Raisina Hill and fireworks cascading into the sky. It was an amazing tribute to the past as well as to the Indian people of today; for it was the finale to their Republic day celebrations.

### **"Politics & Porcelain in China" Lecture by Rose Kerr (1 February 2005)**

Rose Kerr explained that throughout Chinese imperial history the activities and production of ceramic kilns have been highly influenced and controlled by the imperial family. As the most powerful patron of kilns, the imperial family not only funded but influenced the quality, quantity and style of the pieces produced as early as the late Bronze Age through the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

Although we often associate imperial kiln wares with decorative porcelain pieces, one cannot ignore the importance of imperial kilns as producers of building materials. As early as the Western Zhou Dynasty, kilns were commissioned to solely produce the vast number of ornate tiles, wall slabs, bricks and roofing materials for the colossal imperial palaces. Aside from building materials, these early imperial kilns were also ordered to produce tomb figures which were fired and potted alongside the rest of the construction materials used within the imperial tombs such as bricks and irrigation piping.

As early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, Jingdezhen was producing Qingbai wares for local and export use, but it became an official imperial kiln during the Yuan Dynasty, a privilege it held for over five hundred years. As demands for high quality porcelain increased, what was originally a depot for house wares made in small local family kilns grew and a large imperially subsidized factory was built on the Pearl Hill site with kilns, dormitories, halls, wells and studios. Because of its reliance on imperial funding, Jingdezhen was susceptible to the rises and falls of its patrons, and not only was the kiln forced to close its doors at several junctures in history, but the site was on numerous occasions destroyed and its inhabitants of highly trained craftsmen dispersed. Concurrently, the rise of new powers and dynasties usually led to periods of great growth and experimentation at the kilns with new possibilities in designs and decoration.

### **The Dr. K.S. Lo Memorial Lecture by Mr. John S. Guy (25 February 2005)**

For the 2005 Dr. K.S. Lo Lecture, the OCS is delighted to welcome John Guy from the Victoria & Albert Museum to talk on the Belitung shipwreck cargo. The discovery and controlled excavation of the *Belitung* ('Tang') shipwreck in the Java Sea is uniquely important for the history of Southeast Asia and its early relations with China and the international Asian trading world. This ship was carrying a cargo of unprecedented significance, never seen before in the maritime history of Asia. Of the 60,000 artifacts recorded, Chinese glazed ceramics make up the vast majority, representing

all the major types of wares in production in early 9<sup>th</sup> century metropolitan China white wares, Yue wares, green-splashed wares, Changsha wares and Guangdong wares. They constitute the largest single assemblage of high quality Chinese wares of this period ever seen. In addition, there are several unique wares, of which the blue and white dishes the first intact examples to be discovered are of unprecedented importance for the history of Chinese ceramics.

In addition, the cargo revealed a group of gold, silver and gilt-silver objects of unparalleled importance. These are of imperial quality and rival, if not surpass, the few comparable gold vessels found in China over the past thirty years. The octagonal stem-cup ranks with the finest examples seen to date. The chased gold dishes and the ring-punched and engraved gilt-silver boxes are among the best preserved examples of late Tang metal working known to us.

This cargo constitutes the single most important hoard of objects belonging to Chinese late Tang dynasty culture to be recovered at a single site. As such, it makes a unique contribution to our understanding and appreciation of Tang material culture and its place in early 9<sup>th</sup> century international trade. The significance of this find is magnified by the discovery of a Changsha bowl engraved with a reign date equivalent to 826 AD. This date, together with corroborating evidence from the radio-carbon (RC-14) dating of timbers and spices found on board, securely places the shipwreck and its cargo in the second quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and probably very close to the year 826.

John Guy is senior curator/acting head of the Indian and Southeast Asian department of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Prior to joining the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1985, he was the curator of Indian and Southeast Asian Art at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia.

## 10. Publications

Rose Kerr and Nigel Wood: SCIENCE AND CIVILISATION IN CHINA V:12. *Chemistry & Chemical Technology: Ceramic Technology*. Cambridge, October 2004.xlix, 918 pp.,172 illustrations, many in colour, 11 charts, 147 tables, bibliographies, index. 25x19cm. Cloth. (ISBN: 0521838339)

A long-awaited volume comprising the detailed history of Chinese ceramic technology from the late Stone Age to the twenty-first century A.D. Unique in its extent and coverage, this brings together the most recent research materials in several languages for the first time; an essential reference work.

How were Chinese pots made, glazed and fired? Why did China discover porcelain more than one thousand years before the West? What are the effects of China's influence on world ceramics? These questions (and many more) are answered in this lavishly-illustrated history of Chinese ceramics technology. The scene is set through the use of historical texts, archeological excavation, and the principles of ceramic science. Chapters follow on the formation of clays and their relation to the underlying geologies of China, on firing, on manufacturing methods and sequences, on glazes, pigments and gilding, and on the impact of Chinese ceramic technology around the world, from the seventh to the twenty-first centuries.

The volume includes additional contributions by Ts'ai Mei-fen (National Palace Museum, Taipei) and Zhang Fukang (Shanghai Institute of Ceramics).

Retail price GBP 120.00. *Are you interested to purchase?* If there is sufficient demand, we will try to arrange a bulk order at trade price (*less 30%*) plus share of postage.

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